What is claimed is:

1. A customizable hand-held data terminal system comprising:

(a) a microprocessor for computerized processing of data;

(b) an upper housing shell, said upper housing shell comprising a keypad area thereon, and a display opening;

(c) a keypad for input of data located on said upper housing;

(d) a display viewable through said display opening;

(e) a plurality of differently sized base housing shells, wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells is adapted to allow a different configuration of internally mounted hardware components, each of said base housing shells defining a footprint of said data terminal, and wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are interchangeable, and wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are capable of forming a sealing engagement with said upper housing shell to form a data terminal housing;

(f) a self-contained power supply; and

(g) one or more hardware components capable of being mounted internally within the data terminal housing;

wherein said differently sized base housing shells are selectable by a user to accommodate said one or more hardware components, and wherein interchange of said differently sized base housing shells does not alter the footprint of said data terminal, and wherein each said differently sized base housing shells are adapted for use in a single type of docking station providing connection to external components.

2. The customizable hand-held data terminal system according to claim 1 further comprising a substantially transparent touch sensitive input device overlaying said display.

3. The customizable hand-held data terminal system according to claim 2 wherein said data terminal housing comprises said upper housing shell and a base housing shell of sufficient size to accommodate said one or more hardware components, wherein said one or more hardware components comprise an optical reader, an RF transceiver, or both.

4. The customizable hand-held data terminal system according to claim 3 wherein said one or more hardware components comprise an integrated optical reader and RF transceiver.

5. The customizable hand-held data terminal system according to claim 2 wherein said data terminal housing comprises said upper housing shell and a base housing shell of sufficient size to accommodate said one or more hardware components, wherein said one or more hardware components comprise one or more components selected from the group consisting of an RF transceiver, an optical reader, a magnetic stripe reader, a hard disk drive, a supplemental battery pack, a modem, a fax modem, a CD ROM drive, a recordable CD drive, a DVD drive, a floppy disk drive, a mass storage device, a data communication port, and a PCMCIA slot module.

6. A method for manufacturing a hand-held data terminal system comprising the steps of:

(a) providing data terminal having a first configuration comprising a microprocessor for computerized processing of data; an upper housing shell, said upper housing shell comprising a keypad area thereon, and a display opening; a keypad for input of data located on said upper housing; a display viewable through said display opening; and a self-contained power supply;

(b) providing a plurality of differently sized base housing shells, wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells is adapted to allow a different configuration of internally mounted hardware components, each of said base housing shells defining a footprint of said data terminal, and wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are interchangeable, and wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are capable of forming a sealing engagement with said upper housing shell to form a data terminal housing;

(c) selecting one or more hardware components capable of being mounted internally within the data terminal housing; and

(d) selecting one of said differently sized base housing shells that is able to accommodate said one or more hardware components selected wherein interchange of said differently sized base housing shells does not alter the footprint of said data terminal, and wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are adapted for use in a single type of docking station providing connection to external components.

7. The method for manufacturing a hand-held data terminal system according to claim 6 wherein said one or more hardware components comprise one or more components selected from the group consisting of an RF transceiver, an optical reader, a magnetic stripe reader, a hard disk drive, a supplemental battery pack, a modem, a fax modem, a CD ROM drive, a recordable CD drive, a DVD drive, a floppy disk drive, a mass storage device, a data communication port, and a PCMCIA slot module.

8. A method for configuring a hand-held data terminal system comprising the steps of:

(a) providing data terminal having a first configuration comprising a microprocessor for computerized processing of data; an upper housing shell, said upper housing shell comprising a keypad area thereon, and a display opening; a keypad for input of data located on said upper housing; a display viewable through said display opening; and a self-contained power supply;

(b) providing a plurality of differently sized base housing shells, wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are interchangeable, and wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are capable of forming a sealing engagement with said upper housing shell to form a data terminal housing;

(c) selecting one or more hardware components capable of being mounted internally within the data terminal housing; and

(d) selecting one of said differently sized base housing shells that is able to accommodate said one or more hardware components selected wherein each of said differently sized base housing shells are adapted for use in a single type of docking station providing connection to external components.

9. The method for configuring a hand-held data terminal system according to claim 8 wherein said one or more hardware components comprise one or more components selected from the group consisting of an RF transceiver, an optical reader, a magnetic stripe reader, a hard disk drive, a supplemental battery pack, a modem, a fax modem, a CD ROM drive, a recordable CD drive, a DVD drive, a floppy disk drive, a mass storage device, a data communication port, and a PCMCIA slot module.

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